

**CITY OF NORWALK
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
NOVEMBER 13, 2024
HYBRID, COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBERS AND VIA ZOOM**

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone and or Zoom, or a recording in the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at www.norwalkct.gov/meetings.

Members of the public may call in to participate. Callers will not be able to see the meeting participants. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, dial *9 on the phone and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda, and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually-explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.

Members of the public who wish to provide live comments may also use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the “raise your hand indicator” and you will be called by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda, and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually-explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.

Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be included into the record, they must be submitted by 12:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. Please email Esther Murillo at emurillo@norwalkct.gov with the subject line “Public Comment” to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Tyler Fairbairn, Chair; Douglas Hempstead, Vice Chair; Jo Bennett; Ed Camacho; James Clark; Carl Dickens; John Levin; Tanya Small-Rhodes

STAFF: Esther Murillo, Assistant City Clerk; Thomas Livingston, Chief of Staff

OTHER: Steve Mednick, Commission Counsel

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Fairbairn called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Fairbairn called the Roll as indicated above.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: October 29, 2024

The following corrections were made to the minutes:

Correct the spelling of Ms. Obuchowski's name throughout.

Physical should be fiscal.

Mr. Mednick's comments should read that he was aware of two municipalities – Wilton and Bristol, but was not aware of any towns having term limits due to special legislation.

Mr. Canevari's comment should read there should be more interaction with committee and Common Council members.

**** MR. CLARK MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS AMENDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public who wished to comment this evening.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Hempstead noted that the 2025 meeting schedule will need to be voted upon during the December meeting.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discuss proposed revisions

Mr. Fairbairn explained that the purpose of tonight's meeting is to go over any concerns before the next meeting with the mayor and elected officials.

Mr. Mednick explained that he has not yet put together the grid and will have it after the next meeting. He said that following that meeting he will review the public comments from the Mayor and leadership and then schedule the meeting based on the public testimony. Ms. Bennett said it would be great to have a curriculum. Mr. Fairbairn said he believes they will be able to do that especially after meeting with the elected officials. Mr. Mednick suggested that after the next

meeting the Commission go through the Charter chapter by chapter. He requested that all Commissioners provide their observations to him.

Mr. Mednick explained that the format for next week's meeting with the Common Council and Mayor will be the leadership testify before this Commission with back and forth discussions.

Mr. Hempstead requested a history of Common Council representation. Mr. Mednick explained there are no rules for representation for other cities; each community has different representation. Mr. Hempstead addressed Common Council compensation and said the language should be taken out of the Charter. He said if they want to pay themselves, they can do it through an Ordinance. Mr. Mednick explained that if that is silent under state law, that portion of the budget would have to be approved by a referendum.

Mr. Hempstead said another item he is focusing on is minority representation. He said the Redevelopment Agency does not appear in the Ordinance or in the Charter. Mr. Hempstead asked if there were any outstanding issues held over from the last Charter Revision. Mr. Mednick explained the biggest issue was the term of office. Also there were some old provisions that were put into the historical provision of the Charter. He will review these sections with everyone.

Mr. Clark asked if public comments could be made verbatim instead of summarized. Mr. Mednick said he tries to provide a fairly accurate summary in the grid. Mr. Clark said he was concerned about written comments. Mr. Camacho recommended that people making public comments submit their written comments, so they are not subject to anyone's interpretation.

Mr. Mednick said he attributes the comments to the members of the public who made them. Between the minutes and his notes, he hopes his grid provides the information everyone needs. The grid is a public document, and his objective is to capture relevant points.

Mr. Fairbairn said it would be helpful for people to e-mail their comments so there is no loss in translation. Mr. Dickens discouraged sending comments to the Chair and rather suggested making the comments at the public. Mr. Fairbairn explained he was suggesting people send comments to him if they have procedural questions or something needed to be sent to the group.

Mr. Hempstead commented that all meetings are recorded, so they are verbatim.

Mr. Levin said he has a lot to learn about the process and talks to people who are informed and will share his ideas. Mr. Dickens said that is fine, because he is not discussing Commission business. Mr. Levin said he feels he should be able to share ideas and thoughts.

Mr. Levin said he would like to see the comments that were submitted to the last charter revision Commission. He also asked if Mr. Mednick could provide a primer on Connecticut Home Rule. Mr. Mednick explained his PowerPoint has that information.

Mr. Levin said he would like a better understanding of what the last special acts were for the benefit of Norwalk and the history of how Norwalk governs itself. Mr. Mednick explained that if you look at the Charter there are annotations that show the special acts. Mr. Levin asked if there have been special acts passed by the legislature for other municipalities. Mr. Dickson questioned what that had to do with this body. Mr. Levin said he wants to understand what is possible. He said it is useful for the Commission to look at what other towns have done with their charter and what has been successful. Mr. Camacho said he did not understand how Mr. Levin's question was relevant to this Charter. Mr. Mednick said there are no communities that try to amend their charter by a special act.

**** MR. DICKENS MOVED TO TABLE THE DISCUSSION**

Mr. Levin said he wants to know what other towns do.

No vote was taken on Mr. Dickens' motion.

Mr. Fairbairn reviewed the focus of upcoming meetings. Ms. Small-Rhodes asked if it would be best for the Commission to listen and take notes at the meeting with leadership. Mr. Fairbairn said he would like to allow back and forth discussion if people have questions or need clarification. A free flow discussion without getting into a debate will be helpful at the November 19th meeting.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. DICKENS MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:54 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Norwalk
Charter Revision Commission
November 13, 2024
Hybrid, Common Council Chambers and Via Zoom
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